GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4210
ANSWERED ON:25.08.2004
GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS
Patil Shri Shriniwas Dadasaheb

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the new concepts of bio-technology in the filed of agriculture and the role of Science and Technology Department in this regards;

(b) whether genetically modified crops by using bio-technological method would hamper the traditional agricultural system of the country;

(c) if so, whether any assessment in this regard has been carried out by the department;

(d) whether soil quality would also be changed due to use of genetically modified seeds; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE && TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL)

(a) Biotechnology has significant potential for improving the productivity of our agricultural crops. It has created scope for developing crop varieties tolerant/resistant to biotic and abiotic stresses through supplementing the conventional breeding methods. The Science & Technology Departments particularly the Department of Biotechnology, are supporting R & D programmes in this field on marker assisted breeding, development of suitable transgenics and their evaluation in contained field trials.

(b) & (c) Biotechnological methods can supplement the conventional breeding approaches. Each of the new genetically modified varieties is assessed for food and environmental safety, farmers` benefit and effect on traditional agriculture. Only when the benefits are substantial and there is no adverse environmental effect, a new variety is released.

(d) & (e) The data generated so far on commercially released BT cotton by Govt. of India indicated that there is no ill effect on soil quality. However, the effect on soil quality needs to be studied on case-by-case basis.